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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: BELARUSIAN EMBASSY: NO GOR PRESSURE TO RECOGNIZE  
REPUBLICS

REF: VILNIUS 00495

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Susan Elliott for reasons 1  
.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) In a September 25 meeting, Counselor for Political Affairs of the Embassy of Belarus in Moscow Olga Dolgopolova told Poloff that Russia was not pressuring Belarus to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. She insisted that a decision either way on the issue would not affect Russian-Belarusian relations. While the Belarusian Parliament was reviewing whether to recognize the republics, as President Lukashenko announced in mid-September (reftel), politics with Moscow were not playing a large role in the process. The decision would be made "based on the will of the people of Belarus."

¶2. (C) Dolgopolova acknowledged that immediately following Russia's recognition of the Georgian territories last year, Russia had exerted extreme pressure on Belarus to recognize the breakaway regions. However, she said that, "Russia has now moved on; it would have been important to recognize at the height of the conflict last year, but now it is just not important to Russia." Dolgopolova commented that other diplomats queried her on an almost daily basis about which decision Belarus might take, but the GOR had not questioned the Belarusian Embassy about the issue.

¶3. (C) Noting that Belarus had the right to recognize the two breakaway republics, Dolgopolova stressed that there was no point in doing so now, as it was "not going to change anything." Dolgopolova compared the status of Abkhazia with that of Taiwan or Northern Cyprus, and stressed that recognition alone did not make a "country" exist; rather, it could survive without recognition as long as it was self-sufficient with a functioning economy and residents that supported the government. Belarus already considered Abkhazia from this point of view, and stressed that Belarus had for a long time maintained economic and humanitarian relations with the territory of Abkhazia. She had no comment on South Ossetia in this regard.  
Beyrle